

Remarks

The Office Action mailed March 2, 2006, and made final, has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in consequence thereof.

Claims 1-20 are now pending in this application. Claims 1-20 stand rejected.

The objection to Claims 1, 9, and 15 is respectfully traversed. Specifically, Claims 1, 9, and 15 have each been amended to recite “a numerical score *representing* a relative capability.” For the reasons set forth above, Applicants request that the objection to Claims 1, 9, and 15 be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 9-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite is respectfully traversed.

Claim 9 has been amended to recite “a part.” Applicants submit that Claim 9, as amended, satisfies the requirements of Section 112.

Claims 10-14 depend from independent Claim 9. When the recitations of Claims 10-14 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 9, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 10-14 likewise satisfy the requirements of Section 112.

Claim 15 has been amended to recite “with respect to a relative contribution to a process capability improvement of the received information.” Applicants submit that Claim 15, as amended, satisfies the requirements of Section 112.

Claims 16-20 depend from independent Claim 15. When the recitations of Claims 16-20 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 15, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 16-20 likewise satisfy the requirements of Section 112.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Section 112 rejections of Claims 9-20 be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Powers et al. (6,604,084) (“Powers”) is respectfully traversed.

Powers describes an evaluation system (10) including a client space (12) that is implemented on a client platform (18), and a server application space (14) and a database space (16) that are implemented on a server platform (20). Using client platform (18), an evaluator obtains a question table (150) which includes a questionnaire regarding a member (180). The user answers questions on question table (150) to evaluate member (180). The user’s responses to the questions are delivered to server platform (20), wherein the responses are tabulated to produce a quality score (192) and a productivity score (202) for member (180). Quality score (192) and productivity score (202) can then be used to evaluate member (180). Notably, Powers does not describe nor suggest a system or method of evaluating process performance, wherein a server is configured to provide suggestions for improving performance of a desired manufacturing function, or any function for that matter.

Claim 1 recites a system for evaluating process performance, wherein the system comprises “a device . . . a server connected to said device and configured to receive process production capability information data using a computer, from a user via said device, said server further configured to . . . compile the received information . . . display to the user information related to the production process . . . compare the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions . . . display the results of the compared information to the user via said device wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function . . . display at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function.”

Powers does not describe nor suggest a system for evaluating process performance as is recited in Claim 1. More specifically, Powers does not describe nor suggest a system for evaluating process performance, wherein a server is configured to display at least one suggestion for improving performance of a desired manufacturing function. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes an employee evaluation that merely

displays numerical scores based on quality and productivity. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 1 is submitted to be patentable over Powers.

Claims 2-8 depend from independent Claim 1. When the recitations of Claims 2-8 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 1, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 2-8 likewise are patentable over Powers.

Claim 9 recites a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process by operating a system including a server and at least one device connected to the server, wherein the method comprises “determining evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of the production performance capabilities of at least one of the process and a part being evaluated . . . receiving, using a computer, information relevant to the capabilities of the production process within the evaluation categories . . . compiling the received information . . . comparing the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions . . . displaying the results to the user via the device wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function . . . displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function.”

Powers does not describe nor suggest a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process as is recited in Claim 9. More specifically, Powers does not describe nor suggest a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process, wherein the method includes displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of a desired manufacturing function. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes an employee evaluation that merely displays numerical scores based on quality and productivity. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 9 is submitted to be patentable over Powers.

Claims 10-14 depend from independent Claim 9. When the recitations of Claims 10-14 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 9, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 10-14 likewise are patentable over Powers.

Claim 15 recites a method for evaluating performance of a production process using a network connecting a plurality of users, the network including a server and a plurality of user display devices, wherein the method comprises “receieving, from the users using a computer, information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process . . . assigning each evaluation category at least one weighted factor that normalizes the received information with respect to a relative contribution to a process capability improvement of the received information. . . compiling the information received from the users with the server . . . evaluating the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, in comparison to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions . . . displaying the results to the users wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function . . . displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function.”

Powers does not describe nor suggest a method for evaluating performance of a production process using a network as is recited in Claim 15. More specifically, Powers does not describe nor suggest a method for evaluating performance of a production process using a network, wherein the method includes displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of a desired manufacturing function. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes an employee evaluation that merely displays numerical scores based on quality and productivity. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 15 is submitted to be patentable over Powers.

Claims 16-20 depend from independent Claim 15. When the recitations of Claims 16-20 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 15, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 16-20 likewise are patentable over Powers.

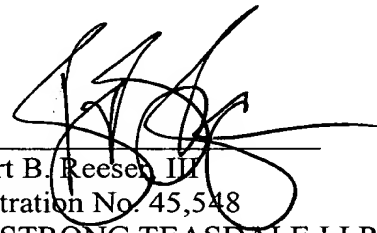
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For the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the Section 103 rejection of Claims 1-20 be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, all the claims now active in this application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. B. Reese III', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops.

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